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ABSTRACT

In summer 1990, the English Department of the Metropolitan Community College District (MCCD) in Missouri conducted a self-study to determine whether the English program's subject matter, academic standards, and methods of instruction were consistent with objectives. An Evaluation Committee, consisting of three English instructors representing each of the three MCCD-member colleges, posed a series of nine research questions, requiring different methods of investigation. The study yielded a number of findings and recommendations, including the the following: (1) the effectiveness of the sequencing of English courses depends on clear exit competencies uniformly accepted throughout the MCCD; (2) the use of the Writing Skills section of the Assessment of Skills for Successful Entry and Transfer (ASSET) has improved placement in entry-level English courses; (3) clearly written summaries of course and assignment expectations, grading standards/assessment procedures, and attendance policies are needed, as well as a greater consistency in grading, tracking, and placement; (4) over 80% of transfer students to four-year schools who responded to a questionnaire felt that their English composition preparation had been excellent or satisfactory; (5) many students do not seem to transfer learning from English composition and reading classes to other courses or to their jobs; (6) grading consistency and course guidelines for composition and literature classes need to be established; (7) the training and assistance given to part-time instructors varies on each campus; (8) students responding to a questionnaire indicated a high level of satisfaction with MCCD literature courses; and (9) the effectiveness of computer assisted instruction in the English program is limited due to a lack of sufficient hardware and software and to inadequate communication between faculty and lab personnel. A short bibliography, data tables, and an essay evaluation scale are attached. (JSP)

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ED 405 905

Findings of the District English Program Evaluation Committee

1992

by
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Metropolitan Community College District

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Summary List of Areas of Strength
and Areas that Need Improvement,
drawn from the Department of English Self-Study

Areas of Strength:

1. Reasonable consistency in grading standards (4).

2. Exit competencies for English 30 established (4).

3. Exit competencies for English 30 and 101 formulated at Longview (4).

4. Better job of placement in the composition courses with the ASSET than before (6).

5. Faculty's knowledge of subject, accessibility, good assignments, willingness to work with the Writing Center staff (LV) and (MW) (8,11).

6. Willingness of instructors to adapt to non-traditional students (PV) (11).

7. Concern and individual consideration given to students by the majority of the faculty (PV) (11).

8. Positive responses from alumni on satisfaction with English courses (14).

9. High level of agreement among the faculty on the content of English 30, 101, and 102 (23).

10. High overall rating for English instructors in student evaluations (25).

11. Worthy part-time instructors with considerable expertise (28).

Areas where Improvement is needed:

1. Clear exit competencies uniformly accepted throughout the MCC (4).

2. Correct placement and supervised tracking through the sequencing for individual students (4).

3. Collection and continued examination of more data on students' success rates following placement by the ASSET (7).

4. Use of a writing sample for placement in writing courses (7).

5. More English Department participation on committees studying the ASSET (7).

6. Uniform policy to do an in-class writing sample the first day of class so misplaced students can be transferred (7).

7. Greater consistency in grading (8) (26).

8. Workshop on holistic grading (8).

9. Lack of part-time faculty time for student conferences (9). Office hours for part-time faculty for pay (30-31).

10. Written writing assignment sheets (11).

11. Clear models for all writing assignments (11).

12. More awareness of some instructors for sensitive and individualized treatment of students at all times (PV) (11)

13. Emphasis on transferable skills in composition classes (12).

14. Techniques for bringing the outside world into the classroom (20).

15. Work with instructors in career fields (20).

16. Class size for composition classes is too large (24).

17. More minority and full-time faculty (24).

18. Media and computer facilities, technology and software (24).

19. Current syllabi (25).

20. District and departmental grade averages availability to all full and part-time faculty (26).

21. Faculty evaluations administered more equitably (26).

22. Instructors meeting more frequently to discuss departmental guidelines (27).

23. Course content agreement among 11 MCC instructors (27).

24. Orientation and training in grading standards for all part-time instructors (28).

25. District-wide computer file of part-time teachers evaluations (29).

26. Staff or administrator specifically assigned to assist part-time faculty (29).

27. Office space for part-time faculty (29).

28. Pay for part-time faculty to attend opening semester meetings and in-services (31).

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INTRODUCTION

Three English instructors, one each from Longview, Maple Woods, and Penn Valley, were asked in the summer of 1990 to undertake an evaluation of the English Department at the Metropolitan Community Colleges. The purposes of such an evaluation, according to Metropolitan Community Colleges District Regulation 6.10070, are "to determine that the objectives are appropriate and that the subject matter, the academic standards, and the methods of instruction are consistent with the stated purposes."

The Metropolitan Community College District is dedicated to serving the educational needs of the community. In this, the colleges' purposes differ from other institutions; we are specifically community-based. That means that how we prepare students for advanced work in local institutions and for jobs in this community is what we must measure if we desire consistency with the District's philosophy.

The philosophy of the District states that "programs are intended to help students understand themselves, the society of which they are a part, and the universe in which they live. At the same time, the colleges provide opportunities for students to develop occupational skills...."

According to the Mission Statement of the District, we are "committed to providing comprehensive educational programs (as well as) courses which meet the needs of persons who desire enrichment or retraining in the areas of liberal arts, occupational education, continuing education, and community services."

A very large percentage of the credit hours in the English Department comes from the composition and reading courses: English 30. 101, and 102. Not only do these courses provide a basis for more advanced work in college, they also serve as an important tool for job success. Therefore, in this report, we will concentrate on examining these courses. We will also take a look at the effectiveness of the literature courses.

No overall statement of objectives for either the composition and reading courses or for the literature courses exists. Some instructors state course objectives in their syllabi or course calendars. Catalog descriptions list only overall course content:

English 30: Writing clear, correct, and effective sentences and paragraphs.

English 101: Methods of rhetorical organization, sentence and paragraph development, and diction. Writing and reading essays of various types.

English 102: Semantics, logic, and critical thinking. Writing essays of various types, including a reference paper.

Literature Reading, discussion, and analysis of novels, plays and poems, short stories, artistic writing of Blacks in America, science fiction--or whatever genre is the subject matter of the course.

How then do we determine that our objectives are appropriate and that our teaching-learning situations in these courses are consistent with the stated purpose? This committee determined that we could best move forward by examining nine basic research questions:

Question #1: How efficiently does an English course prepare students for the more advanced courses, specifically English 30 for 101 and 101 for 102?

Question #2: How effective is ASSET in testing and placing students in English courses in their first semester English course?

Question #3: How do instructors in other Metropolitan Community Colleges programs and support service personnel judge the value and effectiveness of the English curriculum, especially the composition, editing and reading skills taught in English 30, 101, and 102?

Question #4: How effectively does the English composition curriculum prepare students for courses in four year colleges and universities?

Question #5: How effectively do the English courses prepare students for employment in the community?

Question #6: To what extent is there commonality among the English Departments on:

a. exit competencies, textbooks, methods of reaching course objectives, syllabi, retention?
b. grading standards?
c. grade distribution?

Question #7: How effective is our selection, training of and integration into the department, and our evaluation of, part-time instructors?

Question #8: Are the Metropolitan Community Colleges' literature courses meeting student perceived needs in terms of courses offered, scheduling, variety of writers taught, and general course satisfaction?

Question #9: How effectively is the English program using computer assisted instruction? What are our plans to continue assessing its use and effectiveness?

The committee has chosen to concentrate primarily on factors affecting teaching and learning rather than District generated information on revenue and expenditures.

We recognized at the outset that English instructors evaluating the English program presented hazards. We are too close to the subject, have our own biases and we lack objectivity. Further, our efforts, coming from insiders, may not be taken seriously by our colleagues; the stimulating conversations about teaching and learning that should result from such an assessment may not take place. (And that would be unfortunate, as prompting conversations about teaching and learning should be a major plus to come from evaluations.)

So be it. In addition to presenting a hazard, inside evaluation can also present pluses: knowledge of the kinds of questions to ask; information about relationships between departments; generation of an on-going dialogue.

We first met to discuss the evaluation process on July 25, 1990. At that meeting, which included instructor-evaluators from the three programs being evaluated, the question was asked: "Why are we doing this evaluation?" Part of the answer was "This evaluation process will become part of the (North Central visit) self-study." Although we have strong programs in English on all three campuses, there are ways whereby we can improve. We need to change as our students change. We urgently need to keep doing those things that work. We must continue to discuss and implement ideas and techniques that improve the teaching-learning process. Let us critique and use this report.

Finally, and most prominently, we endorse the NCTE "Guidelines for the Workload of the College English Teacher." These are especially crucial to Questions 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6.

REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF THE LITERATURE

For offering examples or giving prototypes of English program evaluation procedures, a search of the literature produced little. Both external and internal sources were examined. This is the first time the Metropolitan Community College district has attempted to evaluate its humanities programs, as a whole; however, some evaluations of sections of the program are available. Externally, few program evaluations were beneficial to the goals of this project.

On external program evaluations, for example, some guidelines were found:

1. In 1982 Mary Vroman reported to the Four C's (Conference on College Composition and Communication) that evaluators must consider both the human and non-human resources in English programs. She pointed out that disagreement on the goals of an English program is to be expected but that the evaluators must describe the goals on the basis not only of documents but also the basis of interviews and observations.

   Some difficulty arises when the evaluators are persons engaged in teaching and administering the program itself; their descriptions of these goals may reflect in large part their own biases and objectives.

2. Writing in COLLEGE ENGLISH in 1985, George Goodin points out that the current English curricula too often fail to relate to other college courses and thus fail to meet the needs of the students.

   Interviews with faculty members in other departments of the college, in addition to interviews with counselors and writing lab personnel, seem to underscore this observation: that English course curricula do not carry over to other disciplines, even when writing is required in those disciplines.

3. The University of California undertook an extensive review of its Writing programs, a thorough examination ranging from goals to textbooks, from teaching assignments to testing. From the study came a sourcebook for the new writing teacher.

While this study concentrates more on documented evidence--course descriptions, committee assignments--than on an analysis of what goes on in the classroom and how that relates to student progress, it does point to the inconsistency among courses, based on course descriptions. The report asks for more freshman preparatory programs and remediation.

4. From the literature search other documents were helpful in selective fields: impact of microcomputers on composition students; comparative assessment of college student performance in Developmental and Freshman English; effectiveness and usefulness of library instruction in the Freshman English curriculum. These were helpful in pointing out possible fields for research; however, the nature of this study does not allow for detailed evaluation of more that one or two components of the English program.

5. Most beneficial, in searching the literature, was reading and talking with the staff of the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) about the work that staff is doing in assessing Humanities programs. Pat Hutchings of AAHE was especially helpful in analyzing our plan and progress.

   At the AAHE Conference on Assessment in Higher Education in 1990, Hutchings presented a paper showing how assessment can change the way we work with students. According to Hutchings: "Number crunching may make for handsome reports, but it may not be in student-teacher interest." In looking over the research questions being posed in the MCC study of the English curriculum, Hutchings commented that the questions, while good, may be too ambitious. She said: "Do not try to prove anything. Rather ask 'What are we doing? What can we do with it? What do we expect from our students.'" She indicated that any evaluation must keep in mind the ultimate goal: how to help improve the teaching-learning situation.

On internal program evaluations, several documents pertain to this study:

1. In 1987 John Gazda of the Penn Valley faculty suggested to the English department members two documents for background reading on measuring English competency, and in 1988 Jeremiah Cameron was assigned the task of determining the major needs of English 30 students to prepare them for 101. In 1989 Catherine Sheeley surveyed English 30 instructors throughout the district. Sheeley summarized faculty responses to faculty questionnaire on "content belonging to English 30, to English 101, and to English 102." No changes in syllabi have resulted from these studies.

2. Although not an evaluative tool but rather a list of expected outcomes, a report developed from the faculty in-service day, October 1988, should be mentioned: "Expected student outcomes for an Associate Degree developed by MCC faculty at in-service day." The first two categories, "Reading/Writing" and "Speaking/Listening" have, to the knowledge of the authors of this report, not been utilized in planning or changing course curricula in English.

3. An October 1990 report from the Task Force Subcommittee on Curricular Coherence submitted a proposal "as a means of implementing and encouraging team teaching" in English as well. (See Appendix, p. 37, Works Cited).

EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ENGLISH COURSE SEQUENCING

RESEARCH QUESTION #1

How efficiently does an English course prepare students for the more advanced English courses, specifically English 30 for 101 and English 101 for 102?

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

A. Compare grades in English 101 and 102 for students who have taken English 30 and 101.

B. Examine exit competencies for English 30 and 101 which instructors would use to determine grades and how well a student is prepared for the next course in the English sequence.

FINDINGS/CONCLUSIONS

The Success Percentage in Composition courses chart (See Appendix, p. 38). indicates that English 30 and English 101 effectively prepare some students for English 101 and 102, respectively. This chart shows that 50% of students who successfully complete English 30 and enroll in English 101 the following semester successfully complete 101. Conversely, 50% of students do not complete 30. Also, 40% of those who do successfully complete 30, and take 101 the following semester, do not successfully complete 101. It is difficult to draw conclusions from this data since some students don't elect to take English 101 in the following semester. Also, this analysis does not take into account instructor grade variation which in some cases may be sizable. The grading consistency project completed by the Longview,Maple Woods and Penn Valley faculty members in Spring 1991

indicates that based on total percentages there are some grounds to believe we are reasonably consistent in our grading; however, there is also rather wide divergence in the grading point spread on any given paper. (See Overview of Thirteen Composition 101 Papers as graded by MCC English Faculty in Appendix, pp. 39-40).

Exit competencies for English 30 were established in the Summer of 1989 when a group of MCC English instructors met to discuss exit competencies and the possibility of exit competency based testing for English 30 and 101. Exit competencies for English 101 were also discussed. Longview has formulated a list of competencies for English 30 and 101. There is a list of English 101 competencies from UMKC that can also be considered. (See Appendix, p.41)There is also a list of expected student outcomes for an associate degree, listing desired outcomes in reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. These outcomes were developed by MCC faculty at the Fall 1988 in-service day. These outcomes have implications for exit competencies, not only in English 30, 101 and 102, but in all literature courses in the English program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Effectiveness of the sequencing of English courses depends on clear exit competencies uniformly accepted throughout the MCC. Effectiveness of sequencing also depends on prerequisites, correct placement and supervised tracking through the sequencing for individual students. Therefore, recommendations are to:

1. consolidate the work already done to formulate exit competencies for English 30 and 101;

2. establish exit competencies, to be met for a minimum grade of "C," that would be used in all MCC English 30 and 101 courses;

3. consider exit testing by a writing sample for all MCC 101 students;

4. consider exit testing, with an essay, for all MCC 101 students;

5. continue to supervise placement and tracking to insure that students are correctly placed;

6. continue regular communication among MCC faculty to promote consistency in grading.

RESEARCH QUESTION #2

How effective is the ASSET in testing and placing students in their first semester English courses?

Since the Fall of 1987, the District has used the Writing Skills section of the ASSET to help place students in the appropriate, English composition and reading course: English 30 or English 101. As of June 1991, students whose scores fall below 35 on the ASSET are supposedly required to take English 30, while students who score above 38 are advised to enroll in English 101. Those scoring between 35 and 38, generally about 20% of those taking the test according to District data, choose between 30 and 101; they make their choice after talking with counselors, assessing Reading and Writing Skills scores on the ASSET, and--at Penn Valley only--producing and having scored an impromptu writing sample. High school grades, recent job training, how recently student has had English, and other skills may also be factors in their decision and have an influence on a counselor's advice.

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

The Office of Instructional Services at the District has compiled data on the success rate of students in 30 and 101 vis-a-vis their ASSET scores. This committee has a copy of the compilation, tracking students from Fall 1989 through Spring 1990. Committees with campus representatives have examined the data; the District Assessment Review Committee makes recommendations about cutoff scores. Various members of the committees have commented on the process. Further, staff and faculty not serving on either committee have commented on the effectiveness of the ASSET as a placement tool. Finally, the committee has sought information from other institutions about techniques for appropriate placement of students in entry-level English classes.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The 1991 Missouri Writing Survey reports:

> "An impromptu writing, sometimes used in conjunction with an objective test in English, is the primary means of placement in 85 percent of the schools which participated in the Missouri Colloquium on Writing Assessment's third annual survey about writing assessment."

Seventeen colleges and universities in Missouri participated in this survey, including the University of Missouri-Kansas City and Longview Community College. The two largest community colleges in our area, Longview and Johnson County, do not use a writing sample to place students in entry-level English classes.

Those interviewed seem to agree that we are doing a better job of placement in entry-level English courses since we started using the ASSET, and possibly because of it, than we were doing without it. As pointed out by the staff of the Office of Instructional Services: "These tools can only attempt to make the best prediction of a student's probable success in the entry level English course."

Methods both for helping students figure out where they have the best chance for success and assuring that they actually enroll in the appropriate class differ on the campuses: (1) as stated, Penn Valley uses students' writing samples for the decision-zone group, those scoring between 35 and 38, while Maple Woods and Longview do not; (2) some students have more opportunity to go over their scores and their previous record than do others, depending on counselor availability, time of enrollment, etc.; (3) some students who score below the cutoff for English 101 still manage to enroll in English 101; (4) not all instructors assess student writing during the first week of 30 or 101, so misplacement is not caught in time to allow the student to transfer to the appropriate class; (5) when students seem to be improperly placed, they can't always switch to the appropriate class because of scheduling conflicts with other classes and work.

There seem to be some confusion and concern about the committees who are responsible for assessing the effectiveness of the ASSET. Different versions come from different committee members. The District Assessment Review Committee (DARC) seems to meet once a year, usually, but according to some members, without adequate data upon which to make adjustments if needed. The other committee, according to the District Office of Institutional research, is made up of "a group of persons who have some responsibility for administering the ASSET; they meet with problems or suggestions about the testing and scoring as well as generating on campus reports for faculty, etc. Most are staff members--they don't make decisions re the cutoff scores." The latter committee seems to be involved primarily in the process of administering the test, while the DARC is responsible for decisions about overall test use, cutoff scores, and placement techniques. This committee believes that more English instructors need to be involved in assessing the data and establishing cutoff scores on English sections of the ASSET.

According to a number of sources, we also need more information about students' progress, we need more data over a longer period of time relating ASSET scores, both Reading and Writing Skills scores, to English class success as well as to success in other classes where reading and writing are involved. Other colleges and universities may be able to offer some help; for example, Johnson County Community College is completing a four-year study, to be ready in July 1991. With our upgraded, computerized student data file, we should be able to get more sophisticated data and thus be better able to make intelligent assessments and recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. We encourage the District Assessment Review Committee to continue its examination of data, especially concerning students' success rates in their entry-level English composition and reading courses following ASSET placement scores. Certainly more data are needed for us to intelligently assess the effectiveness of the ASSET as a placement tool.

2. Notably, 85% of the 17 Missouri colleges surveyed use a writing sample either alone or with a standardized test to place English students in writing courses. Expanding the use of the impromptu writing sample for more entering students should be considered and possibly implemented. One problem is paying the professionals who would grade the writing samples.

3. More English Department input is needed on the committees studying the effectiveness of the ASSET. The English Department representative will make recommendations based on the informed discussion and consent of the English Department.

4. Greater care needs to the taken in the enrollment process to assure that students who score below the English 101 cutoff score do not enroll in English 101.

5. The first part of this recommendation has been in place for some time: during the first week of classes--preferably the first day of classes--instructors should assign, collect, and assess impromptu writing from students. This is a special need particularly as long as only a minority of students submit writing samples as part of their placement test. Students who seem to be misplaced according to the in-class writing can then be counseled immediately into appropriate courses, when feasible. This means some vacancies must be left in English 101 and English 30 into which students may transfer. The second part of this recommendation requires adequate computer feedback to instructors: who can better assist students when ASSET scores are available, plus students' grades on English prerequisites (English 30 for 101, 101 for 102)? Therefore, instructors should have available <u>in their department</u> ASSET scores and previous college grades; these should be on line at a department computer terminal or on the course roster.

6. Along with the need to develop more consistency in grading (see Section 6) if English instructors are to suggest moving students from one level to another, we need to be more aware of what constitutes a passing or failing paper.

   Many instructors continue to mark errors on students' papers, errors such as "subject-verb agreement," "comma splice," "spelling," "run-on sentence,"--this in spite of research that shows this has little benefit to the student unless the instructor relates the grammatical or mechanical marking to a disruption it causes in the reading. We need to be more skilled in holistic grading, both for scoring entry-level compositions and for our work throughout the semester.

   We recommend, therefore, that someone like Joan Vandergriff from UMKC train instructors in holistic grading. This will assist us in speedily assessing student performance during the first day or two of class, as well as assist us throughout the semester. This could look forward to holistic grading for exit competency.

EVALUATION OF THE ENGLISH PROGRAM BY MCC INSTRUCTORS AND SUPPORT SERVICE PERSONNEL

RESEARCH QUESTION #3

How do instructors in other MCC college programs and support service personnel judge the value and effectiveness of the English curriculum, especially the composition, editing and reading skills taught in English 30, 101,and 102?

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

We polled, through written survey and interview, personnel from the Learning Center and the counselors on each campus. We also surveyed and interviewed instructors from selected disciplines and programs on each campus.

FINDINGS/CONCLUSIONS

LONGVIEW:

The Learning/Writing Center staff praised the Longview English faculty for:

1. knowledge of subject matter
2. general accessibility to students
3. specific, relevant and challenging assignments
4. willingness to work with the Writing Center staff

5. willingness to pursue professional development
6. publicizing community events of interest to writing and literature students
7. ability to teach a large and diverse number of students effective writing skills.

The Learning/Writing Center staff also raised important questions:

1. What about the placement of students who need college preparatory programs and students who want basic skills in the same class?
2. What about students who, even after repeated efforts, still do not demonstrate minimum basic skills?
3. Should there be minimum skills/ASSET scores for entry into English 30? (Penn Valley has instituted English 28 and is currently examining the ASSET cut off between 28 and 30.)

Counselors at Longview did not respond as a separate group to the English evaluation.

The chairpersons of Engineering/Math, Natural Sciences and Physical Education, Business and Social Sciences and the Writing Across the Curriculum specialist were interviewed, and they strongly praised what they perceived to be the overall high quality of the English Department faculty and the favorable response of students to their English courses. However, they were concerned about large numbers of students who have limited reading and writing skills. The Writing Across the Curriculum specialist was also concerned about the limited reading, writing and thinking skills demonstrated by students on essay tests, during class discussions, and on formal and informal written assignments and the lack of research skills demonstrated by students. (These deficiencies were not laid at the door of the English faculty, but rather, according to the division chairpersons and the writing specialist, reflect the levels of preparedness that community college students bring with them.)

MAPLE WOODS

The Writing Center staff and the Writing Across the Curriculum specialist praised the English faculty for:

1. knowledge of subject matter
2. dedication to good teaching
3. strong and consistent effort to evaluate student work
4. willingness to work in the Writing Lab

5. efforts to publicize the services of the Writing Lab
6. willingness to work closely with Writing Center staff
7. development of a strong English 30 program
8. development of the LEAFLET and the CREATIVE JOURNAL as campus publication opportunities for student writers
9. accessibility to students.

The Writing Center suggested:

1. a qualified person to work with ESL students
2. more effective assessment for placement that would include a writing sample for all ASSET testing
3. exit criteria for both English 30 and 101
4. effective tracking of students who do not successfully complete English 30
5. specific writing assignment sheets for all major assignments
6. a written description of all major writing assignments on file in the Writing Lab
7. use of MLA as the standard reference model
8. reinstatement of the journalism class.

The Counseling Center staff felt that when the program of a particular discipline is ineffective counselors will hear complaints. Since criticism to counselors from students about the English program is "practically nil," the counseling staff felt this is one strong indicator of the strength and effectiveness of the English program. They judged the English program to be one of the strongest programs at Maple Woods.

The Counseling Center staff praised the English faculty for:

1. offering a variety of classes
2. being student oriented
3. wise choices in recent English staff hiring
4. planning and implementing instruction that is interesting to students and appropriate to their needs.

The Counseling Center staff suggested:

1. It is unwise to have so many part-time instructors teaching basic skills courses, not because these instructors are unqualified, but because of the instructor time commitment necessary for these courses.
2. Additional morning sections of English 101 and Introduction to Fiction are needed.
3. A writing sample should be added to all ASSET testing.
4. A journalism class ought to be reintroduced into the curriculum.

The Business and Speech Division instructors who were interviewed expressed their concern that 1/4 to 1/3 of their students were deficient in composition, editing and thinking skills. They feel this is due to lack of preparedness and students' unwillingness to transfer skills learned in English classes to other courses.

PENN VALLEY

The Writing Center Staff praised Penn Valley faculty for:

1. clear grading criteria
2. a particularly effective English 101 text selection
3. creative and unique writing assignments
4. many excellent and caring part-time instructors
5. the willingness of instructors to adapt to non-traditional students
6. concern and individual consideration given to students by the majority of faculty.

Writing Center Staff suggested:

1. exit competencies for English 30 and 101
2. tracking and enforcement of correct placement
3. specific and written writing assignment sheets
4. the need for clear models for all writing assignments
5. correction of mechanical errors where necessary but a major emphasis on compositional skills
6. a careful assessment of expectations in and a greater variety of appealing literature courses.

Although the English staff was praised for its ability to relate to non-traditional students in a caring and effective way, it was suggested that these skills, with the Penn Valley student body comprised of many non-traditional students, must be consistently used by all instructors in all their dealings with students.

The Counseling Department praised the English program for:

1. a wide variety of courses
2. good screening and placement
3 humane treatment of students demonstrated by caring attitudes
4. openness to new approaches to teaching English
5. diversity of teaching styles
6. good working relationships between English instructors and counselors.

The counselors suggested:

1. use of mainframe access to computerized student records and class enrollment data. This means computer terminals must be available in the English Department
2. consistency in English 30 and 101 placement
3. consistency in grading
4. need for some instructors to be more aware of sensitive and individualized treatment of students at all times.

Business instructors who were interviewed were generally critical of students' ability to compose and edit papers. They also criticized:

1. students' reading comprehension and clear interpretation of oral speech
2. student inability to transfer writing skills to non-English classes
3. special difficulties of ESL students.

Business instructors felt that students were by and large well-intentioned, but often ill-equipped as writers and thinkers.

A biology department instructor focused more on students' ability to read and interpret rather than on writing ability and wanted students to be able to synthesize information more effectively. The instructor also wanted additional help for ESL students and additional instruction for students in the taking of essay exams.

The Occupational Therapy Program judged 17 out of 30 students to be deficient in editing skills. Ten of these 17 have had a total of 17 English courses at Penn Valley. None of these students received a "D" or an "F"; however, they could not write well enough to correctly complete the records required in Occupational Therapy. The Program Director felt that students do not transfer skills learned in English to other classes.

The Writing Across the Curriculum specialist also felt that the main problem with writing skills is that students do not transfer skills from English classes, partly because non-English instructors do not strongly reinforce that it is important to do so.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The above evaluations, including many valuable suggestions for MCC English departments, are only summaries of lengthy survey and interview material. Without being unduly repetitive, we reiterate the need to develop the following

by spring 1992:

clearly <u>written</u> communication of course and assignment expectations, including course or unit objectives, grading standards/assessment procedures, and attendance policies.

by fall 1992:

1. more consistent tracking and placement
2. uniform exit competencies for English 30 and 101
3. consistency in grading

In addition, as an ongoing process, we recommend:

1. to help students develop stronger reading, writing, and thinking skills
2. to help students develop the desire and ability to transfer writing skills to other courses
3. to maintain consistent and caring attention by all instructors to the needs of MCC's diverse student population.

RESEARCH QUESTION #4

How effectively does the English composition curriculum prepare students for courses in four year colleges and universities?

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

1. The District provided statistical information on students who have transferred to the following area four-year colleges and universities: UMKC, CMSU, Avila, and Rockhurst.

2. Ellen Forrest, Director of Instructional Services,

   a. made available the results of the Writing English Proficiency Test (WEPT).

   b. designed a survey focusing on the three disciplines of English, history, and biology. After consultation with the three program evaluation committees, this survey was sent to 1334 Metropolitan District: ('89-'90 graduates of all degree and certificate programs).

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

A total of 315 of the 1334 forms were returned: 156 Longview, 78 Maple Woods, and 81 Penn Valley. Those completing the returns had a chance to win a gift certificate for Crown Center; there was no second mailing requesting return of surveys.

Question #5 of the survey asked the overall question: "In terms of your whole program of study at MCC, how well did your courses prepare you for continuing your education?" Question #44 asked the same question applied specifically to English: "In terms of the English course(s) taken at MCC, how well were you prepared for continuing your education?" Percentages of students marking "E" for excellent and "S" for satisfactory, plus the number not responding (NR), are as follows:

"EXCELLENT" AND "SATISFACTORY" RATINGS, ITEMS 5 & 44, THREE CAMPUSES

Question #5 (MCC program)

Longview				Maple Woods				Penn Valley			
--Percentage---			N	--Percentage---			N	--Percentage---			N
E	S	E+S	(NR)	E	S	E+S	(NR)	E	S	E+S	(NR)
46.0	44.0	90.0	36	47.7	43.2	90.0	44	28.2	48.7	76.9	42
Question #44: (English courses)											
51.1	43.2	94.3	17	31.8	50.0	81.8	12	41.8	45.5	87.2	16

At Penn Valley the largest number failed to respond to question #5: 42 out of 81; also a significant difference occurred at Penn Valley between the highest evaluation of all MCC programs and the highest evaluation of the English courses: E=28.2% for all MCC courses and 41.8% for English courses. At Maple Woods the difference between the score of excellence for all programs (47.7%) and that score for English courses (31.8) is also notable and in reverse of the Penn Valley ratings. Graduates from Longview evaluated English courses significantly higher than at Maple Woods, at the "excellent" level: 51.1% compared to 31.8%, with Penn Valley ranked in the middle, 41.8%. On the combined rankings, "excellent" and "satisfactory", all campuses were above 80%. Highest single rating was at Longview: English courses-Excellent: 51.1% and lowest at Penn Valley (whole program of study-Excellent: 28.2%).

Overall, the graduates' responses to questions about English courses, survey numbers 44-56, were positive. While the percentage of returns was good, 30.9%, questions can always be asked about such techniques for garnering student evaluations, as: "What about the attitudes and responses of the 69.1% who did not return their surveys?"

Furthermore, students who will actually graduate--compared with those who intend to but do not and those whose agenda does not include an AA, AAS, or Certificate Program--make up a minority of students in most English classes: Are their evaluations on a par with students who do not graduate? Also, the respondees' numbers are small at Penn Valley (81) and Maple Woods (78) and therefore represent reactions to a small number of full and part-time instructors. Moreover, to obtain a more accurate picture of the effectiveness of English courses, students who drop out or withdraw should be surveyed.

Care must therefore be taken in generalizing from this data.

Item #45 of the survey asked graduates to respond to the statement: "The English course(s) in which I was enrolled improved my ability to successfully complete writing assignments in other courses." Positive responses in percentages were as follows: (55 students out of 315 district-wide did not respond):

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"STRONGLY AGREE" AND "AGREE" RESPONSES, ITEMS 45,
TOTAL MCC AND THREE CAMPUSES

Question #45		District	Longview	Maple Woods	Penn Valley
Strongly agree:	5	39.2	40.4	31.8	44.6
Agree:	4	46.0	52.5	39.4	37.5
	5+4	85.2	92.9	71.2	82.1

At first this looks favorable. Yet when analyzing the statement and asking whether being able successfully to complete writing assignments, whether being able to transfer writing skills to other courses and, whether these shouldn't be skills whose mastery should be strongly acknowledged by almost all students--then further questions arise. (The survey statement does not define what is meant by "successful completion"--is a "C" grade adequate?) Less than one-third of the Maple Woods' graduates responding to this question strongly agree with the efficacy of this most important learning. Less than half of Penn Valley respondees agreed (44.6%) and only 40.4% of Longview respondees.

Five other items on the survey are particularly fitting for this study: Each begins with the clause "As a result of the MCC English course(s) I have taken," and proceeds with these statements:

#49. my written communication skills are effective
#50. my recreational reading has increased in quantity and/or diversity
#51. my communication skills are adequate to the requirements of my job.
#52. my communications skills are adequate to the requirements of courses I have taken since graduating from MCC
#56. I am able to critically read and analyze the writing of others.

Top responses from those responding to each of these items are as follows, in percentages:

"STRONGLY AGREE" (5) AND "AGREE" (4) RESPONSES, SELECTED ITEMS,
TOTAL MCC AND THREE CAMPUSES

	Total MCC			Longview			Maple Woods			Penn Valley		
	(5)	(4)	(5+4)	(5)	(4)	(5+4)	(5)	(4)	(5+4)	(5)	(4)	(5+4)
#49	25.2	49.6	74.8	24.1	56.7	80.8	30.3	33.3	63.6	21.8	50.9	72.7
#50	14.1	24.8	38.9	14.3	22.1	36.4	14.9	20.9	35.8	12.7	36.4	49.1
#51	23.0	45.6	68.6	25.9	30.4	76.3	20.9	31.3	52.2	18.2	50.9	69.1
#52	23.1	33.5	56.6	26.6	37.4	64.0	22.7	24.2	46.9	14.5	34.5	49.0
#56	22.1	38.5	60.6	21.3	44.7	66.0	24.2	25.8	50.0	21.8	38.2	60.0

The reader may wish to make comparisons between items: #49: written communications; #50 and #56: reading and analysis skills; #51 and #52: general communication skills (How much the last items include listening and speaking skills, and what weight is put on writing versus reading in "communication skills" is unknown). Comparisons between campuses are also interesting, bearing in mind the caveats mentioned earlier. In three areas only were the differences between campuses statistically significant:

1. Item 51: Longview graduates agreed more strongly than did Maple Woods graduates that their communication skills are adequate to their jobs as a result of MCC English courses;

2. Item 52: Longview graduates agreed more strongly than did Penn Valley graduates that their communications skills are adequate for courses at other colleges;

3. Item 56: Longview graduates agreed more strongly than did Maple Woods graduates that they are able to read and critically analyze the writing of others as a result of MCC English course(s.)

There were no other statistically significant differences.

Lowest ratings by students occur in the area of recreational reading. Increasing recreational reading may not be a goal of many English instructors; yet it is promising that half of Penn Valley's and over one-third of Longview's and Maple Woods' respondees agree or strongly agree that they read more as a result of their English courses.

Unlike recreational reading, which may or may not be a goal of English instructors, critical thinking and analysis are goals in teaching English. Over two-thirds of Longview respondees (66%), less than two-thirds of Penn Valley respondees (60%), and only one-half (50%) of Maple Woods respondees agree or strongly agree that as a result of their English courses, they are able to critically read and analyze the writing of others. In other words, among this select group of students, one-third to one-half did <u>not</u> agree that, as a result of MCC English course(s), they are better able to read and analyze others' writings.

Sections of the survey pertinent to the English Department are available in the appendices available in the District Office of Institutional Research.

The results of the WEPT test taken by students entering UMKC indicate MCC students do not fare as well. We would like to point out that we cannot trust the percentages because the data base is too small. We suggest that the mechanics, editing, and logical skills of some students are apparently inadequate for the UMKC test. We do not know how many of our students take the test after completing only English 101. Note that the test is intended for students who have completed two English courses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Although this research question is important, it requires the long-term study of a much larger data base and evaluation of placement test results from other campuses besides UMKC.

RESEARCH QUESTION #5

How effectively do the English courses prepare students for employment in the community?

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

Many of our students attend classes primarily to get better--and better paying jobs. According to Joanie Friend, Director of Penn Valley's Career Center, the first two things employers look for are:

1. Appropriate personal skills: punctuality; ability to follow instructions; willingness to get along with co-workers; adequate basic hygiene.

2. Good, basic communication skills: ability to write a cover letter and fill out a job application; ability to answer in writing: "Why do you want to work for us?"

Employers expect college students' writing to be thoughtful, focused, and relatively error free. In order to answer our research question, we sought information at both the national and local levels. On the national level, we looked for studies that would indicate adequacy of job performance by community college students. At the local level, we asked employers at Tension Envelope and Hallmark Cards to give us their impressions of employees' preparedness.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Nationally, a 1988 federal government report, Building a Quality Workforce, states that workers and applicants do not have the skills to "read and comprehend policy and instruction manuals as well as technical materials; write sentences with correct sentence form, and other matters of mechanics..." A survey of executives of the nation's largest businesses, the National Alliance of Business Workforce Study, reports that 84% of these executives are dissatisfied with the educational training of new employees. What percentage of the employees in these studies have had community college training is not given. That executives are dissatisfied, however, is clear.

Locally, according to executives at Tension Envelope, many employees come to them with adequate skills in communication and computation. However, Tension uses employment agencies whose job it is to reject those who make errors in standard English, especially those applying for jobs that require writing and clerical work of any sort. Unfortunately, some clerk-typists who become secretaries make more errors than is acceptable--the Peter Principle, according to the office manager. Tension Envelope often promotes from within and is too often dismayed to find that good clerk-typists do not make good secretaries.

Bert Berkeley, Chairman of the Board of Tension Envelope, writes that:

> ...in every instance we put a great deal of emphasis on attitude, work ethic, etcetera. While these are subjective evaluations, we attempt to find out as much as we can in order to ensure that we employ high caliber people.

According to Jack Winne, Director of Human Resource Planning for Hallmark Cards, the lead skills looked for in promoting mid-management employees are, first, communication skills, followed by physical management skills and leadership-interpersonal skills. These skills are judged by subordinates, peers and supervisors. Under communication skills come oral, written, and listening skills plus the ability to develop and conduct meetings. From these four pieces, according to Winne, the written skill--the ability to put something together concisely, in writing--is probably the poorest.

Upwardly-mobile employees may have good problem-solving techniques and they may understand the subject, but they fail to condense thoughts into succinct statements; their sentence structure is weak, their vocabulary is limited, and they even fail, sometimes to use verbs correctly. At Hallmark, these deficits can deter promotions.

Hallmark does assist otherwise-able employees in correcting these deficiencies. Employees who score well in other areas are directed to tutorial programs, both internal and external. But employees who misuse three verbs in front of top-level management, no matter how skillful they are in other areas, are already in trouble. Sometimes, such employees have a Master's as well as a Bachelor's Degree. Why have these errors not been adequately drawn to their attention?

Furthermore, why, according to Winne, does an employee take six pages to write something that could be presented in a page-and-a-half? Is it the competition atmosphere, "more is better"? Is the skill of culling, concentrating, summarizing not sufficiently emphasized in English classes?

This committee believes that, while finding out how well our students are prepared for employment is one of the most important research questions, it is one of the most difficult to answer. National studies do not tell us about community college students. Local studies are largely anecdotal. While these are helpful, they do not tell what the specific problems are and what we need to change. We do know that:

1. one of the main reasons students come to college is to develop work skills;
2. the philosophy of the MCC catalog emphisizes that "...the colleges provide opportunities for students to develop occupational skills;"
3. career counselors recognize that good, basic communication skills are important for getting and keeping a job;

Yet, in spite of those points:

1. executives across the country, according to one study, are "Dissatisfied with the educational training of new employees";
2. within our colleges, instructors in career fields are not satisfied with the communication skills of many students (see Section 3).

In this study we have done little more than establish the importance of this research question. In Section 3 we suggested that many students do not seem to transfer learning from English composition and reading classes to other courses. This lack of transfer seems to exist, in many cases, from the students' English classes to their jobs as well.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. English instructors can improve techniques for bringing the outside world into the classroom; they can, for example: invite business people, industrialists, employment agency personnel, our own Career Center directors to speak; work with the Career Center and library personnel on researching careers; assign occasional readings from business sections of local papers; explain terminology from the world of work and personal business, such as economics, computers, personal finance--or ask instructors in those fields to do so; assign reports and memoranda that simulate work requirements.

2. English instructors can work more closely with instructors in career fields, from Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning Programs and Automechanics to Psychology and Pre-Law, in identifying what students need to succeed in those fields.

3. English instructors can help students see that the attitude and work ethic expected in the English classroom are the same attitude and work ethic that make for success on the job: punctuality; ability to follow instructions; willingness to get along with co-workers--in small group work, for example; adequate basic hygiene--perhaps by discussing this with students.

4. Students can bring examples of good and poor employee skills to their English writing assignments: description, comparison-contrast, cause-effect papers, for example; these can be discussed in small groups and with the class.

5. References can continually be drawn between various classroom activities and job success: in reading, the ability to summarize and analyze essays, reports; in writing, the ability to write thoughtful, focused, relatively error-free passages; if some students have difficulty in making the transfer from reading, writing, thinking in class, then instructors have the responsibility to help them make that transfer.

6. Students can be helped to understand the importance of differentiating main from subordinate ideas in a report, a lecture, or a discussion; they can be assisted in thinking through problems and stating positions succinctly, directly. If they realize the importance of this skill for advancement on the job, they may be more attentive to grasping it in the classroom. It seems at least, that we are not entirely successful in teaching it now.

It would be interesting to make the English composition and reading courses electives. Would many students recognize the applicability of their English classes to their job success? Would many instructors be able to show that applicability?

RESEARCH QUESTION #6

To what extent is there commonality among the English Departments on:

1. exit competencies, textbooks, methods of reaching course objectives, syllabi, retention?
2. grading standards?
3. grade distribution?

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

1. A questionnaire was distributed to English faculty and chairs requesting suggestions for the design of a district-wide survey to be answered by all full and part-time English faculty.

The final decision was to focus the survey on English 30, 101, and 102 because these courses are widely taught by most faculty and, therefore, have an impact on the widest range of students. The survey was comprised of 67 questions rated 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) consisting of expectations for classroom focus and course out come in both writing and reading at each of the three composition levels. A space was left at the end of the questionnaire for anecdotal commentary.

Though the same questionnaire was distributed to all English faculty and chairs at each of the campuses, the responses were separated according to full and part-time instructors in order to see what response differences there might be between the two groups.

The survey responses were sent to the District office for statistical computation and analysis.

1. To establish a grading rubric, a set of thirteen English 101 papers was distributed among district faculty for holistic letter grading, "A" through "F" grade.

2. At the Spring 1991 in-service meeting, the committee distributed a questionnaire to full-time faculty requesting an analysis of departmental (1) strengths (2) weaknesses (3) recommendations for improvement.

3. To determine final grade distribution and retention in the three courses, District statistics on all English 30, 101, and 102 composition classes taught during the Fall 1988 and Spring 1989 semesters were gathered for both full and part-time instructors in order to determine:

   a. the District average
   b. the extent of commonality among the individual campuses
   c. comparison/contrast of full and part-time instructors

4. The Office of Instructional Services provided statistics on student evaluations of full-time instructors at the overall District level as well as at individual campuses for the Fall 1989 and Spring 1990 semesters.

5. In order to determine syllabi commonality and currency, the English program evaluators examined a random sample of syllabi from full-time faculty at their respective campuses as well as those on file in the Deans' offices and/or available to part-time faculty. (Note additionally the results of the faculty survey, #1.)

FINDINGS

1. Full and Part-Time Survey

The District printout of the data included three runs:

   a. results of all faculty combined
   b. full-time faculty only
   c. part-time faculty only

Individual campus breakdowns were not given due to the size of the groups. The valid percent column was used because it excludes those who did not respond to the particular question. The lower the mean, the higher the level of agreement.

We determined that the majority of responses fell in the range of 2.0 or lower, indicating strong agreement among both full and part-time faculty. The differences between full and part-time faculty were so minor, we decided to concentrate on the combined results, particularly on items of the highest mean frequency, which included:

English 30

#9. 3.238
Instructors disagreed as to how much grammar should be taught in English 30.

#15. 2.500
Some did not feel it was important for students in 30 to learn how to apply the skills to essay exams and assignments in other courses.

#17. 2.227
Some do not require a great deal of rewriting or journal writing.

#23. 2.400
Some did not expect students to be aware of levels of generality in the reading.

English 101

#30. 2.228
Familiarity with the library was not important for some English 101 instructors.

#33. 3.439
There was strong disagreement about emphasizing library skills in 101.

#36. 2.310
As with question #17 for English 30, some do not emphasize free or journal-writing, including instructor response, in English 101.

#40. 4.303
The strongest disagreement regarded freedom to choose one's own text. Part-time faculty, especially, are assigned the text by the department.

English 102

#59. 3.176
Many instructors do not give a mid-term in English 102.

Considering the length of the survey and the minority of questions faculty disagreed on, the overall finding of the committee is a high level of agreement among the full and part-time faculty at the various campuses.

2. District Grading Standards

The Spring 1991 in-service meeting of the full-time and three part-time English faculty examined the grading results of thirteen English 101 papers. There were many grade assignment discrepancies on some of the thirteen papers. (See Section 1 for an analysis.) The five papers which most clearly represented an overall grade of A through F, respectively, were discussed, especially the C, D, and F

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papers. There was some consensus. However, the outcome of the meeting was a decision to adopt the UMKC guidelines, and to adapt these to suit the MCC 5-point grading scale and for the English 101 grading standards committee to incorporate the department's analysis of what made the sample paper A, B, C, D, or F.

3. Departmental Questionnaire

An analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the English program by full-time faculty indicated a general agreement regarding the strength of division chairs, course content, and faculty rapport. It should be noted that some full-time faculty chose not to respond.

The four most frequently noted weaknesses were:

a. The class size for composition courses is too large for instructors to teach most effectively.
b. We need better placement/screening procedures for students.
c. More minority and full-time faculty need to be hired.
d. Media and computer facilities, technology, and software are inadequate for MCC faculty to be on the leading edge of the English field.

4. Grade Distribution and Retention

The committee looked at statistics showing individual full and part-time instructors' grade distribution for all English courses, including the number of withdrawals.

The majority of grades were in the "B" range, with a few instructors 1. never assigning an "A" or, 2. assigning mostly an "A" or 3. assigning primarily a "C" grade. Overall, there were very few "F" grades.

The withdrawal rate from individual course sections ranged widely. Some instructors had a higher drop rate than others: instructors do not withdraw students, assigning them an "F" grade at the end of the semester; others have high withdrawal rates in afternoon sections. Students need to be interviewed within 6 months after dropping in order to obtain more reliable data on the reason for withdrawing.

5. Student Evaluations

The committee examined statistics on student evaluations of full-time instructors for the fall 1989 and spring 1990 semesters. The ranking on items related to instruction was 4.2 or higher (on a scale where 5 was the highest and 1 the lowest). The last item on the student questionnaire, "Overall ating of instruction," could possibly be considered the most significant single item for judging the effectiveness of instruction, and the results were as follows:

	5	4	3	2	1	
High	%	%	%	%	%	Low
	43	37	17	3	0	

Results were similar for part-time instructors (See Section #7.).

These statistics indicate a high overall rating for MCC English instructors.

6. Commonality and Currency of Syllabi

The syllabi on file in the Deans' offices at Longview, Maple Woods, and Penn Valley are all approximately ten years old. Departmental guidelines are given to part-time faculty. Each full and part-time instructor is expected to put together a syllabus for the course. These syllabi, when they do exist, range from one page of general instructions to several pages of more specific assignments. Few syllabi specify course objectives or state on what basis grades are given.

At Longview, individual instructor syllabi are on file in the chair's office, and major work on the composition courses was done in 1990-91, including departmental selection of a textbook.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Full and Part-Time Survey of English Composition and Reading Expectations

We recommend periodic surveys of all faculty, as well as discussion of the results. It should be noted that due to the ambiguity, lack of clarity, or misreading of some questions (including the 1 to 5 scale system), several faculty probably did not respond in the way they intended. However, this probably balances out overall.

2. District Grading Standards

The evaluation committee would like to emphasize:

a. We respect the recommendations of the Grading Standards Committee.
b. Grading consistency needs to be established.

3. Departmental Questionnaire

The committee urges serious examination and correction of the weaknesses, especially the four areas noted under Findings. Other wise the strength and credibility of the English program in the MCC District will fall behind other area colleges.

4. Grade Distribution and Retention

Grading standards and both District and departmental averages should be made available to all part- and full-time faculty to enable them to see how their grade distribution compares with the mean.

Department chairs should continue to periodically bring for general discussion statistics for both grade distribution and student retention. If there are problems, the individual instructor should be made aware of the deviation. These statistics, however, should not be used to punish the individual instructor, especially if it is not a typical semester-after-semester occurrence for that instructor.

The committee feels it is important for the District English program to have clearly defined standards and to periodically have instructors examine, discuss, and redefine them in a group setting.

5. Student Evaluations

While the statistics on student evaluations of full-time instructors show a generally high rating, the committee would like to point out potential flaws in the method of instructor evaluation:

a. Generally, full-time faculty are allowed to choose the class section in which they will be evaluated. For part-time faculty, there is a tendency to not encourage this option. Given a choice, faculty will select their best class sections. The procedure should be administered more equitably.

b. Full-time non-probationary faculty are evaluated every five years; probationary faculty every year; part-time faculty usually twice a year. The evaluations should be administered more equitably.

c. There should be stricter control of distribution and collection of student evaluation forms.

d. In addition to his/her student evaluations, each instructor should be given a computer printout of departmental and District rankings for courses taught that semester.

6. There Should Be Commonality and Currency of Syllabi

While instructors should continue to have flexibility in their design and approach to the teaching of the various courses, the composition and literature classes taught by large numbers of instructors should have greater continuity of content and course guidelines. Part-time instructors, particularly, should be given more information regarding course content, syllabi, classroom procedures, and the philosophy and mission of the MCC District.

Syllabi on file in the Deans' offices need to be updated by a wise committee, not by an individual, and made available to all English instructors.

Instructors need to meet periodically to discuss departmental guidelines. Ideally, there should be course content agreement among the instructors of the MCC District, so that students transferring from one campus to another will find continuity in the course content, if not in instructors' individual approaches to teaching it.

RESEARCH QUESTION #7

How effective is our selection, training, evaluation, and integration into the department of part-time instructors?

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

In the spring of 1991 part-time instructors were questioned about their satisfactions and dissatisfactions with the teaching-learning situation at the colleges. Their responses were compared with spring, 1991 full-time faculty responses. Student evaluations of instruction, fall and spring of '89 and '90, for part-time faculty were compared with full-time faculty evaluations for the saw period. Both techniques have deficits. Many part-time instructors and full-time instructors did not return their questionnaires; therefore, that the responses are representative can be questioned. The student-completed instruments were not balanced: part-time instructors are evaluated each semester during their first year of employment; after that, they are evaluated once

a year. Therefore, the student responses are more numerous for first year instructors. Furthermore, comparing these responses to full-time instructors is risky because only once every five years is a full-time instructor evaluated. Therefore, the full-timers' evaluations make up but one-fifth of the total number.

In addition to using data--cautiously--from the above instruments, we have recorded comments from part-time instructors, both written and oral, and from full-time instructors, department chairs, directors, and deans. We also examined instruments concerning part-time instruction produced both on our campuses and elsewhere.

These include: analyses and recommendation on the teaching of English 30 and the training of part-time instructors, Cameron/Sheeley/Hodgkinson reports, Penn Valley, 1986-91; Part-Time Faculty Report, Price, Penn Valley, 1987; Faculty Excellence Committee report, 1990, Longview; Innovation Abstracts, University of Texas at Austin, 1990-91.

FINDINGS

Selection of Part-Time Faculty

On each campus a core group of part-time instructors share with contract teachers the teaching of the English 30, 101 and 102. Many have proven their worth to the college, and the departments continue to rely on their expertise--this is spite of the fact that they have no assurance of continuing employment. These instructors are evaluated each year by the students they teach. They know the system, and, even in the presence of paltry or out-of-date syllabi, they continue to perform at average to above-average levels.

On the other hand, it is occasionally necessary to select a new part-time instructor as classes are beginning. Little screening can take place, in this instance, before the new instructor walks into the classroom. Just how many students are going to enroll each semester, thus how many sections of a class will be needed, cannot be known in advance. Therefore, this situation will continue to exist.

At present, there is little communication between campuses about the performance of part-time instructors. A group of department chairs, called together by Johnson County Community College, has met to discuss part-time faculty selection and retention, along with other mutual problems. They have discussed exchanging lists of part-time instructors and to monitoring part-time instructors' loads across campuses. Some part-time and full-time instructors have questioned the right of colleges to question part-time faculty loads, pointing out that full-time faculty have the right to teach seven classes. (Our district policy limits part-time faculty to four classes at MCC.)

Another method for screening the selection of part-time faculty has been suggested several times. That is to set up a computer file on part-time faculties' student and department evaluations. This file would include names of those who have taught during the past five-or-so years. A division chair could consult the file when looking for hirings; those found deficient, beyond remediation, could be screened out. Thus someone who was found inadequate at Maple Woods would not be hired at Penn Valley.

Also on the computer file would be names of and information about people who had inquired about part-time teaching or who had been identified as potential teachers. Members of the department, as well as others who were interested, could name candidates for part-time teaching positions. To date, no action has been taken on the request for such a computer program, though it has been put high on the priority list.

Training of and Assistance to Part-Time Instructors:

Presently the training of and assistance to part-time instructors vary on each campus. Longview, with more part-time English instructors, seems to have a more thorough process of integrating part-time instructors into the department. The department chairman is an English professor, the offices are in the same area, and the part-timers have greater access to assistance from full-time instructors.

On all campuses, some part-time instructors have been on board for many years, thus needing little training. Newly hired ones do receive assistance at the beginning of each semester, and they are presented with a handbook for reference. Unfortunately, no staff person or administrator is assigned specifically to aid part-time instructors, and division chairpersons are often occupied or unavailable. This is especially true for evening instructors. When problems arise, such as student complaints or students' disruptive behavior, too often no one is there to advise and assist.

The same complaints arise from part-time instructors on all campuses:

1. Office space: no place to keep materials and belongings; no place to meet with students in conference; need locking file drawer to leave materials in.
2. Texts and materials: no part in selection of textbooks; no input on materials selected for any course; no access to duplication (photocopying).
3. Attitudes: feeling of being second class; not enough contact with and appreciation by other faculty.
4. College-wide concerns: clarification of basic academic procedures for instructors and for students; low pay.

Part-time instructors are invited to division and department meetings; however, many part-timers work other jobs, of necessity, and cannot attend.

Full-time instructors are required to announce and maintain office hours for their students; such is not the case for part-time instructors. The recommendation has frequently been made that part-time instructors keep one office hour per week for each three-hour class--such hour to be paid for by the college. After all, their students are just the same as the students in other classes; simply because the instructors are part-time does not mean their students should be discriminated against. To date no action has been taken on this recommendation.

Evaluation of Part-Time Instruction

Part-time faculty members are evaluated by their students each semester during their first year's employment, and once a year during subsequent years' employment. On all items of the MCC student evaluation of instruction for fall and spring semesters 1989-90: (1) mean responses for part-time instructors (N=1365): 4.1 or better; (2) mean responses for full-time instructors (N=286): 4.2 or better. On the same compilation, the percentage of responses in five categories for "overall rating of instructor" was also comparable:

Student responses to "overall rating of instructor"
MCC Data, Fall-Spring 1989-90

HI:	5	4	3	2	1 :LO	N=*
Full-time	43%	37%	17%	3%	0	286
Part-time	41%	41%	15%	5%	1%	1365

*See caveats under Method of Investigation, paragraph one, above.

This data was provided by the District Office of Assessment and Instruction. The close parallel between part-time and full-time instruction seems to indicate that the two groups are fairly well matched. Further, individual items generally differ but slightly, e.g. "Broad accurate knowledge": part-time mean score: 4.5, full-time mean score: 4.6.

In addition to assessing students' reactions to part-time instructors, full-time instructors visit the part-time instructors' classes and make a report to the division chair. That report plus the students' evaluations are then discussed by a committee of the division with the instructor.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Part-time instruction has inherent inequities for the instructors: low pay, no benefits, no job stability, little control over class or textbook selections; for their students: little or no access outside of class periods. Given these circumstances, minimally, we suggest:

   a. pay for: attending semester meetings and in-service days; one hour paid office hour for each three hour class taught;
   b. availability of assistance: a buddy or mentoring system; a staff or faculty person available during day and evening hours.

2. A district-wide and perhaps community-wide data listing of part-time instructors and their evaluation ratings: those who have taught do, and could, teach in the community college system.

3. A district-wide effort to synthesize studies and recommendations and use feasible ones, to listen to part-time faculty concerns, and plan with them for the best possible teaching-learning situations in the English Departments.

4. An analysis and review of part-time instructors' grading standards shoud be done by representatives of the English full-time faculty on each campus.

5. It is crucial that full-time instructors continue to evaluate part-timers, since this is one of the few opportunities for formal contact between them.

RESEARCH QUESTION #8

Are the MCC literature courses meeting student-perceived needs in terms of courses offered, scheduling, variety of writers taught, and general course satisfaction?

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

MCC literature classes completed a survey in November, 1990, designed to get student assessment of courses offered, scheduling, variety of writers taught, and general course satisfaction. The following courses were surveyed:

Longview - Classical Mythology, World Literature I, Masterpieces of American Literature, English Literature, American Literature, Introduction to Fiction

Maple Woods - Women in Literature, English Literature I, American Literature I, Introduction to Fiction

Penn Valley - African American Literature, Introduction to Literature, Introduction to Fiction

FINDINGS

Course Offerings:

The following courses were suggested as future offerings:

Longview: Drama as literature, fiction/fantasy, classics, mythology dealing with systems other than the Greeks, Shakespeare, modern culture in literature, 20th century American literature, the Bible as literature.

Maple Woods: Women in Literature II, men in literature, poetry, Greek literature, more Shakespeare, mythology, science fiction, American literature, Russian literature, Afro-American literature, classics, Greek mythology, fantasy literature, Introduction to Fiction II, 20th century literature, theatre as literature, a great authors course.

Penn Valley: American Indian literature, Asian literature, science fiction, early American literature, Afro-American literature, novels, films, world literature, Russian literature, Asian literature, Latino literature, Shakespeare, mythology.

Scheduling:

Longview: The most frequently requested change was for additional literature classes taught in the morning hours. There were also suggestions for week-end classes, Friday only classes, and a few suggestions for additional evening classes.

Maple Woods: Students suggested a variety of additional times including evening and week-end classes, but most often suggested additional daytime classes.

Penn Valley: Students suggested additional day classes, both morning and afternoon times.

Variety of Writers Taught:

On all campuses in courses such as Introduction to Fiction, American Literature, Introduction to Literature, Masterpieces of American Literature, and Women in Literature students indicated that ethnic groups, particularly African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans and Native Americans, were well-represented. Ethnic groups were also present, but in lesser numbers, in Classical Mythology and English Literature.

General Course Satisfaction:

Students who completed the survey indicated a high level of satisfaction with literature courses they were taking in the "Comments and Suggestions" section of the survey. Out of approximately 110 comments there were fewer than five that expressed dissatisfaction with the course. Many comments were complimentary about both the course and the instructor. There were also a number of suggestions for improving courses. These suggestions were thoughtful which indicates that students were positively engaged in the course. These surveys were done at the end of the semester. To obtain more accurate evaluation of our literature courses drop-outs should also be interviewed.

The survey indicates that Longview, Maple Woods, and Penn Valley are successful in offering a variety of courses that include some writers outside the traditional literary canon at times convenient for our students. In the MCC catalog our philosophy states that "The College programs are intended to help students understand themselves, the society of which they are a part, and the universe in which they live..." Since we are teaching literature courses in ways that engage students and invite them to read, write and discuss literature, literature courses seem to be contributing to the implementation of our philosophy.

Students are having what they judge to be enjoyable and valuable learning experiences in MCC literature classes. However, their suggestions indicate a fairly sophisticated understanding of how the traditional literary canon is expanding as they express their desire for additional, less traditional courses. Their comments also recognize the need to integrate a variety of presentations of material that go beyond the traditional lecture/discussion format.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. We recommend that student suggestions about course offerings and scheduling be implemented where possible.

2. Part of our original research question dealt with how effectively literature courses help students increase their general knowledge and develop interest in and ability to read literature. It would be difficult, but most helpful, if we could devise an effective evaluation strategy to deal with these concerns. For example, further evaluation could help us to assess how well we are using current deconstructionist literary theory that introduces reader response as a necessary and legitimate part of the experience of evaluating and understanding a literary text. Thereby we can stay abreast of not only developing literary theory but other important pedagogical information that could suggest ways to expand our curriculum and our teaching philosophies and methodologies.

3. We should consider how we can better promote higher enrollment in our literature courses. For example, we need to do a better job of encouraging students in our writing courses to take literature courses. Also, since MCC philosophy is in accord with values developed in literature courses, we should encourage the inclusion of literature requirements in degree plans.

RESEARCH QUESTION #9

How effectively is the English program using computer assisted instruction? What are our plans to continue assessing its use and effectiveness?

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

Learning and Computer Center personnel at Longview, Maple Woods, and Penn Valley were interviewed to determine:

1. use of computer assisted instruction for students in English classes (as well as in other classes) and

2. future needs.

FINDINGS

Longview/Blue Springs

Longview campus has an academic computer lab where composition students can type their papers if they wish. The Learning Center does not have computers with software packages, but relies exclusively on a system of personal and group tutoring, as is also the case at the Blue Springs campus.

Maple Woods

Beverly Whitaker discussed instructional use of the computer for English 30, 101, and 102. The Writing Across the Curriculum coordinator and two part-time reading instructors with MA's tutor in the lab. In addition, two regular English faculty work there. English Composition 30 students take the English Microlab Test and then do writing modules corresponding to their needs. However, the computers and specific software (Blue Pencil, Queue, Skills Bank) are available to any student seeking help with specific writing problems. Students are discouraged from writing their papers there

because "academic and learning lab computers do not mix." In upcoming semesters, all English 30 students will be scheduled for two weeks of work in the micro computer lab to learn word processing for use in their classes and at work. There is also an academic computing lab available in the Business building, where some writing, editing, and revising assistance is available.

Penn Valley

Johnnique Love noted that some English composition classes go through an orientation in the academic computer lab with their instructors. A separate orientation is also provided for part-time English composition instructors. Tutors teach the word processing packages, and papers can be typed in the lab. In the new computer center all English 30 and 101 classes have been scheduled to learn and work with WordPerfect® beginning with the fall 1991 semester. The Learning Center has the Writer's Helper program and three computers with printers, so students may work on papers there and have tutorial assistance at hand, if needed. The Learning Center also has software on spelling, grammar, punctuation, and other sentence-level problems that students use according to their individual needs.

All campuses indicated a strong need for more hardware and software as well as a better system of referrals and reporting between faculty and lab personnel. Maple Woods recommends buying the Blue pencil software package (which it presently uses) and requiring an in-class test in English composition classes at the beginning of the semester to determine what modules students need to study in order to meet basic proficiency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The English departments at Maple Woods and Longview do not presently have the latest technology or necessary computer lab space necessary. Fulfillment of these needs should be a high priority for the near future.

2. Important issues have arisen regarding computer literacy and changes in the teaching of composition. We need to become more aware of the incursion by other departments into areas we have traditionally considered ours and which our English departments might wish to continue teaching. For example, use of software packages is taught outside the English area. On the one hand, decisions regarding the teaching of format, spelling, grammar, etc., are already being made by other divisions; on the other hand, writing is a great deal more than this, and our English faculty need to learn how to incorporate the latest advances in computer use into their teaching.

ADDITIONAL ASSESSMENT NEEDS

The English departments on all the MCC campuses need to assess at least two additional concerns relevant to our future approach to teaching:

1. How should the learning resource centers be used in conjunction with our classes?

2. What should be the role of the research paper in English 102?

WORKS CITED

Battle, Mary Vroman. "Professional Evaluators' Insights Applied to Assisting Freshman English Programs." Report. Conference of College Composition and Communication, 1985.

Goodin, George. "Competence and Curriculum in English." College English Jan. 1985: 30-38.

Hartzog, Carol and others. "A Report on the Freshman Writing Program." Report. University of California Los Angeles Department of English, Oct. 1982.

Hutchings, Pat. "Assessment and the Way We Work." Report. Fifth AAHE Conference of Assessment. American Association for Higher Education, June 30, 1990.

Success Percentage in Composition Courses
Enrollment and Performance
by ASSET Placement Categories
Fall 1989/Spring 1990

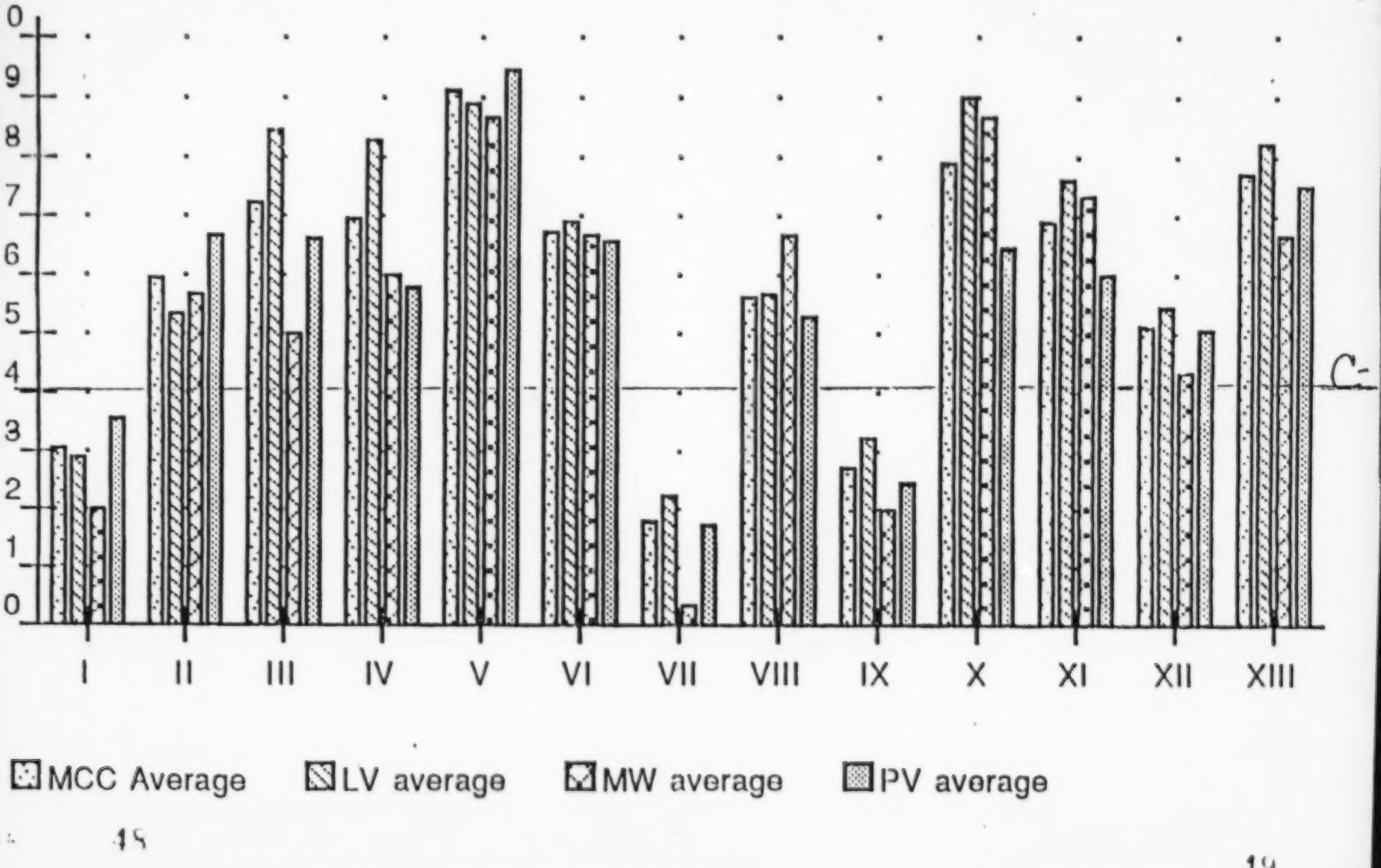
Writing Skills

ASSET Scores	English 30 Required (34 & Below)	Decision Zone (35 - 38)	English 101 (39 and above)
N	837	889	2486
% of Total Enrolled in Engl 30	33.8	16.6	0.6
% of Enrollees Earning C or Better	54.4	56.8	56.3
D	11.7	11.5	--
F	9.9	11.5	6.3
W	24.0	20.3	37.5
% of C or Better Group Enrolled in Engl 101, Spring 90	50.6	53.6	55.6
% of Enrollees Earning C or Better	60.3	66.7	40.0
D	12.8	11.1	40.0
F	3.8	13.3	--
W	23.1	8.9	20.0
% of Enrolled in Engl 101	7.4	29.2	43.9
% of Enrollees Earning C or Better	62.9	62.7	65.4
D	8.1	6.9	4.1
F	14.5	11.2	7.1
W	14.5	19.2	24.5
% of C or Better Group Enrolled in Engl 102, Spring 90	38.5	47.2	46.4
% of Enrollees Earning C or Better	53.3	72.7	75.0
D	--	9.1	6.6
F	6.7	3.9	2.5
W	40.0	14.3	14.9

Source: Placement to Initial Course and Second Course Performance Study

[redacted]

Overview of Thirteen Comp 101 Paper as Graded by MCC English Faculty



Spread Sheet on Grades As ed to 13 Comp 101 Papers
By 22 MCC English Instructors

Paper	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI
LVa	3	6	5.5	7	7.5	5	1	5.5	3	10	9
LVb	5	5	10	11	8	8	2	8	8	11	11
LVc	2	5	8	5	8	5	2	2	2	10	7
LVd	5	4	6	8	9.5	8	2	5	5	10	5
LVe	3	9	11	10	11	9	4	6	6	11	10
LVf	4	4	11	10	10	8	2	5	4	10	8
LVg	2	3.5	6	6	6	4	0	7	1	4	4
LVh	0	5	8	8	8	11	1	4	0	5	5
LVi	3	4	8	10	11	6	4	5	0	11	7
LVj	2	8	9	8	10	5	0	6	0	8	10
MWa	3	9	4	6	8	8	0	5	3	10	8
MWb	2	6	6	7	8	4	0	5	3	6	6
MWc	1	2	5	5	11	8	0	6	3	10	9
PVa	2	5	8	10	8	11	1	7	0	8	5
PVb	2	11	3.5	5	10	3	0	5	0	6	5
PVc	2	8	3	0	11	4	2	4.5	3	1	5
PVd	8	5	11	0	8	7	0.5	2	1	2	11
PVe	5	6	5	10	10	8	2	10	2	2	5
PVI	4	8	9	6	11	4	0	7	5	5	9
PVg	5	8	10	6	11	8	3	5	2	2	11
PVh	2	5	2	10	9	4	2	9	5	5	5
PVI	5	8	8	5	7	9	2	0	2	2	2
MCC Average	3.0454545455	5.9318181818	7.2272727273	6.9545454545	9.0909090909	6.7272727273	1.75	5.6363636364	2.7272727273	7.9090909091	6.9090909091
LV average	D 2.9	C 5.35	B-/C+ 8.45	B-/C+ 8.3	B 8.9	B- 6.9	D 2.2	C 8.65	D 3.2	B 9	B-/C+ 7.6
MW average	2	5.6666666667	5	8	8.6666666667	6.6666666667	0.3333333333	6.6666666667	2	8.6666666667	7.3333333333
PV average	3.5555555556	6.6666666667	6.8111111111	5.7777777778	9.4444444444	6.5555555556	1.7222222222	5.2777777778	2.4444444444	6.4444444444	6
Paper	LVA	LVB	LVC	LVD	LVE	LVF	LVG	LVII	LVI	LVJ	LMWA
I	3	5	2	5	3	4	2	0	3	2	3
II	6	5	5	4	9	4	3.5	5	4	8	9
III	5.5	10	8	8	11	11	6	8	6	9	4
IV	7	11	5	8	10	10	6	8	10	8	6
V	7.5	8	8	9.5	8	10	6	8	11	10	10
VI	5	8	5	8	4	8	4	11	6	5	8
VII	1	2	5	5	6	6	1	4	5	0	5
VIII	5.5	8	2	5	5	7	4	5	0	3	3
IX	3	8	10	10	5	4	1	0	5	8	10
X	10	11	7	5	10	10	4	5	5	10	2
XI	9	11	2	4	9	8	3	5	5	9	9
XII	6.5	11	5	8	9	6	9	5	8	8	7
XIII	8	11	5	6.5	9	10	7.5384615385	4.1153846154	5.3076923077	8.1538461538	6.0769230769	6.0769230769
Instructor's Av	5.9230769231	8.3846153846	5.0769230769		8.0769230769						

Papers graded

Grades Averages C+ B C B-/C+ B B C- C C+ C+ C+

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51 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

MCC AND UMKC GUIDELINES FOR ESSAYS

EVALUATION SCALE

	4	3	2	1
I. Point/ Thesis/ Idea	Is very clear; one thoughtful idea clearly dominates the essay.	Is fairly clear; there are passages of thoughful, related argument, but overall point is not sustained throughout the paper.	There is some attempt at a dominant idea evident, but it is not successful or not sustained throughout the paper.	Is not clear at all; there is no guiding principle to the essay; the author's point is not distinguishable at all.
II. Development/ Support	There is imaginative use of a convincing amount of proof/ support of the author's point(s).	There is an effective use of an adequate amount of proof/support ideas.	The support supplied is either inadequate to support the writer's ideas, or it is not effective.	There is little if any support of the author's point(s), or, the evidence provided does not support the author's ideas.
III. Organization/ Logic/ Coherence	The organizational pattern used is logical, easy to follow and rhetorically convincing; the essay works as well as a whole to address the writer's concerns.	The organizational pattern used is somewhat evident in that over-all the paper is fairly coherent, but there are some internal coherence problems.	The organizational pattern used is barely discernible or is illogical; an attempt at coherence is evident, but over-all there is little coherence in the in the ideas.	There is no logical pattern of organization evident; the paper rambles from one topic to another without connecting them. There is no overall coherence.
IV. Usage and Mechanics	This is virtually error-free prose.	The reader noticed occasional errors in spelling, punctuation, diction, etc., but generally experienced a smooth reading.	The reader was distracted by frequent errors in spelling, punctuation, diction, etc., or many errors of one type, but was able to make sense of the of the text.	The reader was greatly distracted by many errors in spelling, punctuation, diction, etc., and was unable to make sense of the text in more instances than not.
V. Use of Sources	There is effective and accurate use of sources to supplement the author's point documentation has been correctly done. The author demonstrates the ability to into integrate the material logically into his/her argument.	The use of sources is adequate both in integrating the information into the text and in correctness in documentation. The writer can use texts in his writing somewhat effectively.	There has been some attempt to use the sources to supplement the author's point, but the documentation is incorrect or inadequate, or there is evidence of merely token integration of the ideas from the articles.	There has been no attempt to use the sources, or the attempt is completely incorrect in the sense that the author has merely repeated the ideas and/or not documented them at all. Plagiarism could be a possiblity.

ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE FOR JUNIOR COLLEGES JUN 12 1992